

# A Queens Co-op Replaces the Windows with Ease Thanks to a Two-in-One Contractor

By Tom Soter

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**Aug. 19, 2015** — *How getting a two-in-one contractor made a difference in a window replacement project in Queens.*

The **Forest Hills Chateau** is not really a chateau nor is it actually in **Forest Hills**, but that hasn't stopped purchasers from buying into the attractive 189-unit property, built in the 1960s. The redbrick façade is clean and the building is on a tree-lined street with easy access to **Manhattan**, and reasonable sales prices (two recent sales were for \$142,000 and \$127,000).

Oh yes, and they have new windows.

Hurricane damage leads to waterproofing project. The new windows came about because of **Hurricane Irene**, which struck in August 2011. Damage from the storm led the seven-member board to institute a waterproofing program for the entire building. In 2013, after the waterproofing was in place, there were still leaks.



58-03 Calloway Street in Corona

"They weren't from the exterior of the building," observes **Steven Greenbaum**, director of management at **Mark Greenberg Real Estate (MGRE)**, the firm that manages the property. "They were really because of the windows. When we examined the 600 or 700 windows, we found that they had really outlived their useful life."

Custom-designed windows were needed. One problem immediately surfaced: the window openings did not fit standard, pre-fab styles. "It was a laborious task," Greenbaum says. "We had contractors come in and [give] a presentation with their sample windows. We narrowed the field down to two or three window companies and asked them to do a sample installation. This way we looked at the window to see which we liked installed. Then we negotiated the best deal with the best contractor and came up with the right window for the building."

There are benefits to hiring a manufacturer/installer. The co-op went with **Kelly Windows**. Greenbaum had actually worked with them before at the 900-unit **Georgetown Mews** co-op in **Queens**, and, he says, the result at Georgetown was "flawless." Beyond that, the board liked that Kelly was both the manufacturer and the installer. "Many companies are just installers. They buy their windows from different manufacturers," says Greenbaum, who adds that when problems subsequently occur, the manufacturer will blame the installer and the installer blames the manufacturer. With Kelly, "Nobody is pointing fingers at anybody."

When Kelly was awarded the job, the board invited the window company, the engineer, the manager, and the board to "a meet and greet" session. The contractor brought window samples, and the shareholders met with the owner of the company, the project manager, the head of the installation team, and some of the installers. Greenbaum and the MGRE site manager, **Patricia Ford**, were also on hand.

It is important to brief the residents before the job. "We explained the window, how it's going in, how we're going to take on the job, what the company will do, what they need to do prepare," says Greenbaum. "A window job is somewhat intrusive, but if it was clearly communicated then everybody understood what the job was supposed to be. You have to gain access to every apartment, and they have to make a clear path. They have to take off their blinds and window treatments. Some of them have window air-conditioning units, and furniture in the way. It's a very intrusive job, so we needed the cooperation of all the shareholders. We gave them a couple of weeks advance notice."

An experienced professional can reduce anxiety. The meeting and Greenbaum's personal involvement were crucial to the smooth running of the job, says the manager. "I wanted to be involved because [my experience in doing these jobs is reassuring]. Also, I've always believed that if you communicate properly, the fear of the unknown is taken out of the job. Nobody goes, 'Oh my God, I know I'm going to get windows, but who's the installer?' How much can you put in a letter? When you really hold, touch, and open and close the window, it's better than getting just a letter or an e-mail."

The \$450,000 job was initially going to be financed through a special assessment, but after the first three months of assessments had been levied, interest rates dropped and the board refinanced its underlying mortgage, using the extra money to pay off the rest of the project. The work began in September and was finished in December.

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